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Reviewed Work: An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815. by Joyce E. Chaplin

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nial Annapolis as well as its industrial benefactor. The industrial age broke down the social stratifications created by the elite and manifested through etiquette and other rules of behavior. Shackel gives us a refreshing glimpse of our most recent past by carefully arraying the most democratic evidence of all, the archaeological artifact. I believe this is a seminal work for the potential value of similar studies undertaken currently in both history and archaeology.

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An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730–1815. By Joyce E. Chaplin. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press and Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1993. xviii, 411 pp. \$45.00, ISBN 0-8078-2084-9.)

Joyce E. Chaplin's contribution in undertaking this study of the lower South between 1730 and 1815 is twofold: she illuminates a region of colonial North America and the early republic that clearly merits greater attention, and she challenges basic assumptions about economic development in the period before the South grew resistant to change and became intolerant of criticism. Chaplin argues against the existence of an antimodern, unimproving South during this period. Instead, she focuses on planters engaged (albeit apprehensively) in the pursuit of innovation. Such behavior, she concludes, resulted from the influence of Enlightenment ideas of progress. In an exhaustive review of agricultural innovations in the lower South (specifically as they related to the development of rice, indigo, and cotton), Chaplin concludes that whites' willingness to accept modern ideas extended only as far as was necessary to suit their needs. They embraced modernity to the extent that doing so enabled them to gain and maintain control over the environment, the labor force, and the economy. For instance, lower South whites developed new mechanisms for dealing with their slaves, and from time to time (as conditions dictated) they diversified the economy and moved toward in-

dustrialization. But in the end, commercial agriculture carried out by slave labor dominated the lower South economy. By selectively embracing modern thought and shaping it to fit their particular circumstances, whites managed to retain and protect the institution of slavery while viewing themselves as a progressive people.

Chaplin draws on an impressive array of both primary sources and secondary literature. Her meticulous research, commanding grasp of Enlightenment thought, and insight into the behavior of the lower South's free and enslaved populations make this a persuasive work. One wonders, however, if her conclusions concerning the impact of modern ideas on whites are, at times, a bit overstated. This is especially so as regards her discussion of the influence of Enlightenment thought on shaping master-slave relations. Chaplin argues that certain practices designed to mollify slavery during this period reflected lower South whites' acceptance of "the essential humanity of their slaves," an acceptance that was precipitated by the modern idea of universal humanity. Rather than Enlightenment ideas encouraging whites to seek new, more humane ways to manipulate their slaves into laboring more diligently, could it be that the slaves were manipulating the owners? To what extent was this change in master-slave relations the result of the slave's ability to extract certain concessions from owners desirous of effecting labor peace? Chaplin does acknowledge the growing independence of the slaves, especially as a consequence of certain innovations. But the contention that whites altered their tactics because of modern ideas tends to underestimate the ability of the slaves to effect change. This is not to suggest that Enlightenment ideas played no part in shaping the relationship between master and slave; it is only to argue for a greater consideration of the role the slaves played in influencing the behavior of whites during this period.

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